DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 184 396 **HE 012 393**

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TITLE Strategies for the Challenges Facing Women in Higher Education Administration.
PUB DATE Apr 80
NOTE 10p.: Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the National Association of Women Deans, Administrators, and Counselors (Cincinnati, OH, April 12, 1980)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Administrator Role; *Administrators; Conflict Resolution; Deans; Decision Making; Family Life; *Females; *Higher Education; Job Skills; Middle Management; *Professional Development; Professional Occupations; Salary Wage Differentials; *Sex Stereotypes; Surveys; Values
IDENTIFIERS Time Management

ABSTRACT

Women administrators in higher education must deal not only with the usual challenges facing administrators (decision-making, resolving conflict, and advancing professionally), but also with the effects of sex stereotyping. Women are not seen as decision-makers, nor as conflict-resolvers, and are often viewed as supporting personnel rather than people interested in professional development. To study these additional challenges, the 400 Kentucky members of the National Identification Program for the Advancement of Women in Higher Education were surveyed. As a result the challenges are divided into seven categories, those of: (1) acquiring the first administrative position; (2) dealing with social stereotypes on the job; (3) management skills; (4) dealing with the reward system; (5) conflict between personal and professional life; (6) professional advancement; and (7) the woman administrator who perceives no problems and therefore makes no attempt to overcome them. Specific remedies are suggested for individual women administrators, such as time and task management skills and resources. (MSE)

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STRATEGIES FOR THE CHALLENGES FACING WOMEN IN HIGHER EDUCATION ADMINISTRATION

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HE 012 393

Women in higher education administration must deal with challenges of two types in their work. First they must deal with the usual challenges met by many higher education administrators-making sound decisions, resolving conflict, and advancing professionally. Secondly, they must deal with the challenges which confront them as women administrators. Typical administrative challenges have an added dimension for the woman. Every administrator attempts to make sound decisions; however, our society does not view a woman as a decision maker; therefore making it more difficult for her to make a decision and have it accepted. Every administrator deals with conflict situations; however a woman, the lady once set upon a pedestal by society, is not expected to deal with such sordid matters. Every administrator wishes to advance professionally; however a woman is expected by society to play a supportive role, to aid her husband, family, or her boss, but never to desire her own professional development.

To study challenges of this second type facing women in higher education administration and to discover what strategies help women successfully deal with them, the 400 Kentucky members of the National Identification Program for the Advancement of Women in Higher Education were used as a resource. This group which was created through a project of the Office of Women in Higher Education of the American Council on Education, was surveyed regarding the challenges of women in higher education administration. At statewide conferences in the past two years, these women developed strategies to deal with the challenges.

CHALLENGES OF WOMEN ADMINISTRATORS

From a survey of these women administrators, the challenges facing them can be divided into seven categories. First there are challenges which appear when attempting to acquire the first administrative position. Second, there are problems at work dealing with social stereotypes of women. Another area involves managerial problems confronting women only. A fourth challenge involves dealing with the reward system. Managing conflicts between one's personal life and one's professional life is another area of concern. The challenges facing a woman as she attempts to advance in her profession is the sixth area of concern sighted by the women administrators. The last focus is the woman administrator who perceives no problems.

CHALLENGING STEREOTYPES

To deal with these challenges the women administrators in Kentucky have developed numerous strategies. The strategies for facing the challenge of acquiring the first administrative position will not be presented as members

of the National Association for Women Deans, Administrators and Counselors have dealt successfully with the challenge. Many of these strategies are similar to the strategies which will be discussed in covering challenges facing women as they attempt to advance professionally.

The second challenge, that of dealing with stereotypes at work, frequently confronts women administrators. Women must deal with the old double standard. Women must work harder and longer and later than men to be considered successful administrators. Women must prove their ability while men are assumed to be successful administrators until proven otherwise. This double standard will not be eliminated by having women administrators pointing out that it is unfair. They may indeed have to do a better job than a male administrator at least for a time to succeed. In order to meet this challenge, there are four strategies that the woman administrator can employ. First, she can learn to delegate. Instead of doing all the work herself she can learn to share the responsibility and still get the work done. Books on management, continuing education seminars or a resource person in the business department of the university in which she works can be helpful in developing skills of delegation. A second important area for the overworked woman administrator is time management. Again, the resources within the business department of the university or a book on time management such as How to Get Control of Your Time and Life by Allan Laekin can give her some helpful ideas. To avoid becoming overworked she must also make sure that she does only the tasks described in her job description. In her eagerness to prove her worth she should avoid taking on extra responsibilities unless she can also complete the projects which are clearly her own and unless she can receive credit for the extra task. Fourth, when a woman administrator has proven her worth through a successful project she should make sure that she receives credit for it. She should make sure her name is on the well researched report. If a presentation of the report is necessary, she should make it. To summarize, when dealing with the double standard, strategies for success are: learning to delegate, applying time management techniques, doing tasks only within the job description, and getting credit for successes.

Another stereotype often evident in a work place is that all men are superior and all women are inferior; women administrators must deal with this challenge to their abilities. The public, other administrators, students, and secretaries may view a woman administrator as unequal to a male administrator in the same position. A dean who is a woman may not appear as knowledgeable as a dean who is a male. To

overcome this stereotype, six strategies are suggested. First the woman administrator should take herself seriously. If she is not self confident about her ability to do the job, people around her certainly will not be. While self confidence is an inner quality, she can reflect this trait in her appearance. She can pay heed to dress for success tips - wearing the business suit, avoiding dangly, jangly jewelry, and carrying a briefcase rather than a purse. Third, when introducing herself for the first time whether in person or over the phone, she should use her most prestigious title. If she has a Ph.D., she is Dr. Jane Brown, not Jane Brown. To prove one's competence, it is also important to be active in professional associations. Having joined the professional associations related to her position, she should volunteer for their committees and in time assume elective office in them. If she is a member of a large professional association, she may wish to prepare for its annual conference by reviewing the conference program, selecting the session in which she is most interested, and formulating a question or two to ask at the conclusion of the session. Asking an intelligent question at a national program will dispell the stereotype that women are inferior and may make a good contact as she advances in her career. One final point about dealing with stereotypes on the job, do not assume that they are always at work. A sarcastic remark by a coworker, failure to receive a promotion, or the rejection of an idea is not necessarily evidence of male chauvinism. Every day male and female administrators meet opposition; it should not be taken personally - bitter women administrators have more problems than women administrators.

MANAGEMENT SKILLS FOR WOMEN ONLY

A third area presenting challenges for women involves management skills especially needed by women administrators. Every administrator needs to make decisions, develop skills, find role models and explain their problems to others. However, women administrators face special challenges in these areas. Because society assumes women will not be in positions of leadership, women are not expected to make decisions. A good administrator, however, must make decisions. So a woman administrator must move into areas where decisions are made and participate in the decision making process regardless of what society expects of her. Six strategies are suggested to help a woman administrator be seen as a decision maker. First, when job hunting, she needs to find a position which involves decision making and policy making; being a dean, a chairperson, or a director, involves decision making and indicates to future employers that the woman is a responsible administrator.

Being an assistant dean, an assistant chairperson, or an assistant director indicates that the woman is good at writing reports, keeping records, and preparing material for the person who does indeed make decisions. Women who want to move forward in their professional career need to avoid the four A's: associate, assistant, acting, or adjunct positions. Second, if the woman administrator is in one of these positions, then to gain experience in decision making and policy making and to have her vita reflect this skill, she needs to structure her job so that she is responsible for a specific project or an area in which she can make decisions. When she develops her vita, she should list the areas for which she is responsible in addition to her job title.

To gain experience in making decisions, the woman administrator should attempt to be involved with key committees. She will gain experience in decision making and develop a reputation on her own campus for being involved in important decisions. Fourth, when serving on committees, it is important that the woman administrator avoid the secretarial role. The person in this role becomes so involved in taking notes that he/she cannot become involved in the decision making process. In serving on committees it is also important that a woman administrator receives credit for the ideas she suggests. Because society stereotypes woman as a passive creature needing to be protected rather than as a leader, the ideas of a woman in a group are often ignored; women are not expected to take the lead in directing groups. Frequently a woman suggests an idea, it is ignored and when the same idea is later in the meeting suggested by a man, it is enthusiastically endorsed. At that point, the woman administrator needs to take credit for her idea. She could do so by saying "thank you for bringing up my idea again. I appreciate your support."

A sixth strategy to help women become involved in the decision making process is the development of political expertise. Developing a good idea is not sufficient; it needs to be accepted and that is where political strategy comes in. The woman administrator should know the key people on her campus, whose backing is going to be necessary to get this idea accepted. If the key people involved in the decision making process are not going to support her proposal, it might be better for her to withdraw the proposal rather than be associated with a defeat. If the key people favor the proposal, she should plan her strategy for getting her proposal accepted - what parts of the proposal is she willing to compromise on, what parts of the proposal must absolutely be retained, and which ones can be rejected.

In addition to becoming involved in the decision making process, the woman administrator needs to develop her administrative skills just as any male administrator does - another management skill with a special "for women only" component. Because women traditionally are not perceived as administrators, the institution may be less likely to remember to allocate funds for the professional development of a woman or to inform her of the appropriate conferences. It is up to the woman administrator to find the appropriate professional associations for someone in her position and request funds to attend their annual meetings or other training sessions. In a time of dwindling resources, funds for conferences may not be available. Then the woman administrator needs to identify those on her own campus perhaps in the business department, perhaps other administrators, who have the skills she needs. Most of these people will be flattered and indeed very helpful if she requests them to advise her on ways to develop her skills and about books or journals which could help her.

Another way of developing skills is by learning from role models. However, women administrators often lack role models. If they are not present in their own institution, women can look for them in other professional associations, such as the National Association of Women Deans, Administrators, and Counselors, the Women's Caucus of the American Association for Higher Education, and the National Identification Program for the Advancement of Women in Higher Education Administration, Office of Women in Higher Education of the American Council on Education. These associations not only provide role models but a system of support for dealing with day to day problems on the job and for information when moving on to another job. In addition to these national associations, many universities now have a campus association for women administrators. Women administrators from all areas of the university meet for lunch and to hear a guest speaker on a managerial topic. If the women administrator is on a campus which lacks such an association, she may wish to develop one or to develop an informal network of women in administration. By meeting with them for lunch or after work, she can share ideas and discuss possible methods for solving day to day problems.

A further managerial challenge for women only is educating other people at work on the unique problems of women administrators. Many male administrators are more supportive of their female counterparts once they are aware of the unique problems women face. One means of educating men to these problems is a filmstrip created by Rosabeth Moss Kanter entitled, "The Tale of 'O'." This filmstrip describes the problems faced by any group member who is different from all the other

members of the group. The filmstrip can be rented from Good Measure Incorporated, 6 Channing Place, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 02138.

RECEIVING REWARDS

A fourth challenge facing the woman administrator involves dealing with unequal rewards for the work she performs as compared to the rewards given the male administrator. The inequality could be receiving a lower salary than that of her male counterpart, lacking the privileges given other administrators at her rank - access to a charge card, complimentary tickets to functions, or use of a university vehicle; and dealing with the attitude that a woman doesn't really need a job - after all she has a man at home to provide for her. To get equal pay for equal work, a woman administrator may need to present statistics showing that men in other comparable institutions in her position receive a higher salary than she does. If she has access to salary figures at her own institution, these statistics would be even more helpful.

To receive the privileges associated with someone at her rank, the woman must be aware of what privileges go with that rank. When she first joins the university, she should request information on the fringe benefits; she would also learn of these benefits through observation and conversations with her peers. If all the other deans have credit cards provided by the university so visiting dignitaries may be taken to lunch, the woman dean could infer from this observation that it is university policy to provide these credit cards to deans. Usually pointing out the inequity will correct it.

To deal with the attitude that a woman does not really need the job, many women can point out that they really do need the job; as the head of a household they are the sole provider for either themselves or their family. Even if they are not in this position, they can point out that universities in the United States operate under a capitalistic system. People are rewarded for their contribution, not on the basis of their need as in communism. The man with three children is not paid more than the man who has none; therefore the woman who has no children to support or a husband to assist her in the support of her children should not be paid less than the man with a family. Most university officials would not advocate the overthrow of the capitalistic system for communism.

PERSONAL - PROFESSIONAL CONFLICTS

In addition to problems with the reward system created by the marital status

of a woman administrator, her personal life in general can create conflicts with her work; this conflict was the fifth challenge described by women administrators in the survey conducted. The demands of a family and the demands of a professional career can overpower a woman administrator. One way of dealing with these demands is to apply the techniques of time management both at home and at work. Set priorities for work to be accomplished both at home and at the university; group similar tasks to be performed; and never pick up a piece of paper or piece of laundry twice. Delegate the tasks involved in running a house. This could mean distributing chores among family members or hiring help to clean the house, do the shopping or mow the lawn. The woman administrator should not feel guilty about distributing these tasks; she cannot be a superwoman.

To deal with the conflicts of a personal and professional life, the woman administrator needs to be in good health. Too often women, who spend most of their time caring for others, neglect themselves. Exercise of some type is important. One woman administrator recalled a week long conference sponsored by IBM which concluded every day at 4:00 P.M., at which time all the male administrators doned their jogging clothes, tennis shorts or their golf shoes and prepared to exercise while the women administrators went quietly back to their rooms to study for the next day. The male administrators realized the importance of physical health; women administrators need to learn this also.

A final area of conflict in personal and professional lives involves the dual career couple. For both of them to advance in their professions while remaining in one area is very difficult. The husband and wife need to discuss the possibility of alternate career moves; if she receives a good job offer in an area where he is likely to find work, they should move. The next move then would be at his discretion. Marriages involving commuting also are becoming prevalent, and this possibility too should be explored rather than have either party sacrifice his or her career.

PROFESSIONAL ADVANCEMENT

The sixth challenge facing women administrators is advancing in their profession. First the woman administrator needs to define her career goals, the path to achieve these goals and the skills necessary to achieve these goals. She should review her own skills and see if any are lacking. Does she have the proper degree to advance in her profession? Does she need additional educational opportunities, a conference on delegation or more experience with the budget? She should discover how the current holders of positions to which she aspires got there. Can she get

to where she wants to go from where she now is? If not, she should move into the proper position. Frequently people holding staff positions are not seen as good candidates for line positions. The women administrator should acquire the skills or some of the experience necessary to move into a line position.

In her current position, she should make sure performance criteria for her job are clear so both she and her employer can tell when she is doing a good job. Her supervisor needs to be informed of her successes on the job. If a paper is accepted for publication, notify him or her. If a new procedure which she has developed makes her operation function more smoothly, she should let the supervisor know. The person to whom she reports needs to be informed of what she is doing, especially if she is doing it well.

When the woman administrator begins a search for a new job, she should make sure that her vita is in good form. This means checking or having a friend check that it is well organized, that it evidences skill with the English language, that it clearly indicates how she may be reached by phone or correspondence, and that it is on appropriate stationery. Another strategy is to alert the professional and personal networks that the search process has begun and have them forward any openings. When the woman administrator is invited for a job interview, she needs to learn as much about the institution to which she is going as she can before arriving there through the University's catalog, professional associates who are familiar with the campus, and reference work describing the university. To prepare for the interview, she will think of the questions she is likely to be asked by the search committee and prepare well thought through responses, remembering that she is looking at the institution as well as having the institution look at her. Determining ahead of time what information she needs to know about the university is important. For example, will the financial condition of the university affect the position being sought? Are changes in the administrative structure proposed? Why is the position vacant?

NO PROBLEMS

Finally there is the woman administrator who perceives no special challenges facing women as opposed to men in higher education administration. She is usually a new administrator. More experienced administrators should be patient with her; help her with problems as they arise; and perhaps indeed there will be fewer problems for her in her career because of the challenges successfully met by the woman administrators who proceeded her.